

November 19, 2012

Statement on HB 6004--"Educational Achievement Authority," "Achievement" schools, Educational Products thereof

Good afternoon Representative Lyons and Members of the House Education Standing Committee. My name is Maiyoua Vang. I am an assistant professor in the school of education at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. I speak today as a citizen who is very much concerned about the "learning platform" promoted by Dr. John Covington and which is currently in use in the 15 buildings delivered to the "Educational Achievement Authority" or EAA. I am alarmed that under HB 6004, not only will Detroit's children continue to be subjected to this untested learning platform, but more children throughout the state as well will be subjected to this yet unproven intervention product.

As a researcher, what speaks to me is data, and I would like to share some data with you now. At the start of Dr. Covington's second year as Superintendent of the Kansas City Missouri School District (academic year 2010-2011), he assigned a total of five elementary schools to pilot a new "Standards-based learning" product. This "standardsbased" learning product was eventually rebranded to the now familiar "Student-Centered Learning" platform or SCL. The plan was to pilot this "Student-Centered Learning" or SCL platform in a few select elementary schools, evaluate the results, and then roll out the implementation in another five elementary schools the following year. What I'm going to share with you now are the before and after results of Dr. Covington's SCL platform in Kansas City. According to state accountability test data from the Missouri Assessment Program or MAP, the first year's results of Dr. Covington's SCL initiative was mixed at best and disturbing at worst. To illustrate, here is the breakdown of third grade performance on Missouri's state accountability test for Primitivo Garcia Elementary, the "Model School" that Dr. Covington used to showcase SCL implementation in the district. The first graph shows 2010 performance data for the Communication Arts (i.e., Language Arts) before the implementation of SCL. The second graph shows 2011 performance data for Communication Arts after the implementation of SCL. All data is publicly accessible from the Missouri Department of Education website.

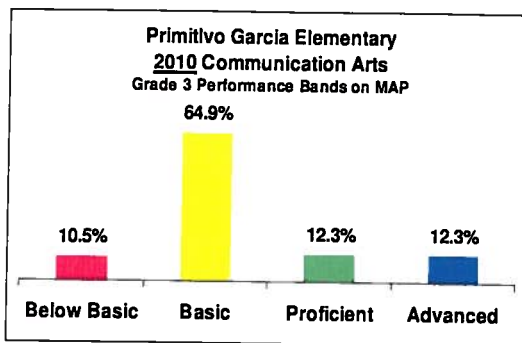


Figure 1 Performance Data pre-SCL platform

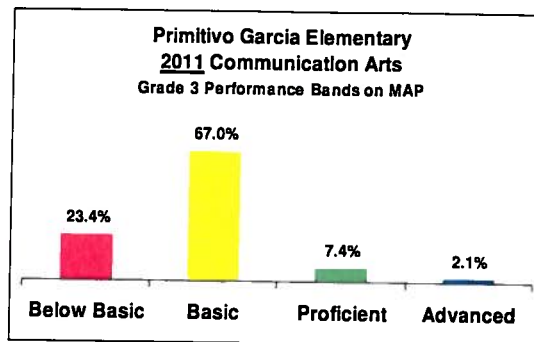
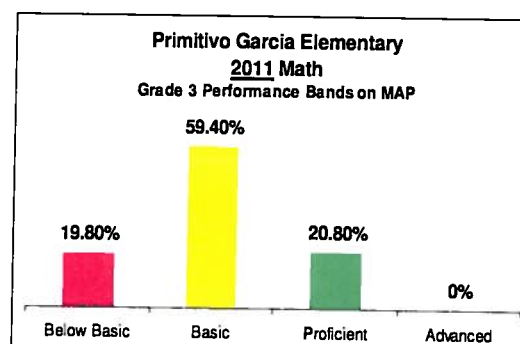
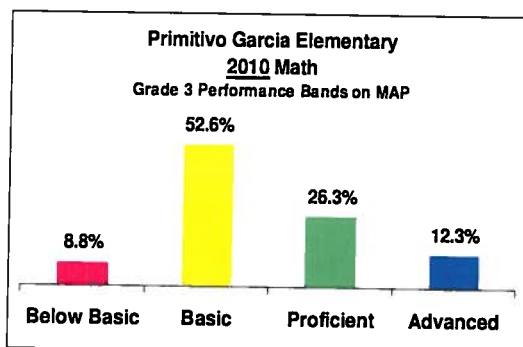


Figure 2 Performance Data post-SCL platform

We see that after SCL was implemented in this model school (Figure 2, second graph), the percentage of students scoring at both the advanced and proficient levels declined noticeably. Moreover, the percentage of students scoring in the lowest performance band, Below Basic, more than doubled.

As the following figures show, this backtracking also occurred in math, where after SCL implementation, 3rd Grade Math performance in the "advanced" performance band dropped dramatically from 12.3% to 0%. The percentage of students scoring "proficient" also dropped while the percentage of students performing in the "below basic" band more than doubled, from 8.8% to 19.8%. It appears that 3rd grade SCL implementation reduced the percentage of students scoring in the top two performance bands (proficient and advanced) at Primitivo Garcia School, increased slightly the percentage in the basic band, and more than doubled the percentage of students captured in the lowest band, or Below Basic.



Across the tested grade levels (3-7) in Primitivo Garcia Elementary, again the showcase school for the district's SCL implementation, performance data were troublesome. As Table 1 shows, the percentage of students scoring at proficient or advanced in the

Communication Arts (Language Arts) dropped across all tested grade levels after Year 1 of implementing the SCL platform, with 7th grade plummeting from 62% of students in the proficient and advanced performance bands to a startling 0%.

	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Year 2010	24.6%	27.5%	26.3%	42.5%	62%
Year 2011*	9.5%	25.9%	25.1%	24.0%	0%

* Results after SCL implementation

Table 1 Primitivo Garcia Elementary: Percentage of Students in the Proficient and Advanced Performance Bands for Communication Arts, Before and After SCL

As Table 2 shows, with the exception of 5th grade, where performance remained roughly the same pre- and post- SCL implementation, Math scores similarly dropped across grade levels, with the biggest recorded drop occurring in 6th grade, down from 76.6% scoring in the proficient and advanced levels to 30.8% after SCL implementation.

	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th
Year 2010	30.6%	43.1%	31.6%	76.6%	28%
Year 2011*	20.8%	38.2%	32.3%	30.8%	No Data

* Results after SCL implementation

Table 2 Primitivo Garcia Elementary: Percentage of Students in the Proficient and Advanced Performance Bands for Math, Before and After SCL

Of the five pilot elementary schools Dr. Covington tapped for SCL rollout, two schools fared poorly (Primitivo Garcia being one), two performed modestly, and one school stayed relatively the same. The inconclusive and lackluster performance of SCL schools coupled with low test scores around the district hastened a school district press release that offered the following explanation:

The 2011 MAP [Missouri Assessment Program] scores posted by our students are lower than our 2010 results. This momentary dip in performance was not unexpected given the rapid and multifaceted changes the district has initiated...We're neither pleased nor satisfied with the results...

(Kansas City Missouri School District Press Release, August 4, 2011)

The press release goes on to cite the 2010-2011 launch of the pilot SCL schools, giving the rationale that these schools do not focus on "simply teaching to the test..." Even with the inconclusive data, five more elementary schools were scheduled to launch SCL in the 2011-2012 school year, but after Dr. Covington abruptly vacated his post as Kansas City Missouri Schools' chief in late August of 2011, the district scrapped the SCL initiative and there were no plans to follow up with test data.

For those reasons, I cannot emphasize enough my objection over launching an educational product, SCL, to be used on our most vulnerable of students in a proposed statewide school detention district. This intervention product was piloted, and very unscientifically, in a total of five elementary schools with dubious results. Furthermore, there were no middle schools or high schools included. There were no randomized trials, no longitudinal data, and thus no trend lines to scrutinize. We have but a year's worth of data on five elementary schools that is scientifically inconclusive, and yet we are ready to launch this statewide for our lowest 5% of schools under HB 6004. Based on what little data is available of this SCL design, it is my contention that this intervention product, the cornerstone of the EAA curriculum, is unproven and again fails to merit statewide implementation with our most needy of schools. It is imperative that we avoid the kind of haphazard decision-making and unstable leadership that led to Dr. Covington's former district, Kansas City, being stripped of its state accreditation following his abrupt departure, as reported by the *New York Times* (Sulzeberger, September 20, 2011).

Thank you for your time and your service to the children of this state. I have full faith and confidence that you will place the learning of our children above and beyond anyone else's bottom line.

Respectfully submitted by Maiyoua Vang to the House Education Standing Committee
this November 19, 2012.